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# THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF MEDICINE.

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ANNUAL ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT,

**FREDERIC HENRY GERRISH, A.M., M.D.,**

DELIVERED AT

NEW YORK, 13th NOVEMBER, 1888.

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THE  
SPECIAL FUNCTION  
OF THE  
AMERICAN ACADEMY OF MEDICINE

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ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT,  
DELIVERED AT THE  
ANNUAL MEETING IN NEW YORK,  
13TH NOVEMBER, 1888,  
BY  
FREDERIC HENRY GERRISH, A.M., M.D.,  
OF PORTLAND, ME.

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*PRINTED BY ORDER OF THE ACADEMY.*

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PHILADELPHIA :  
1889.

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1889

"THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF MEDICINE IS NOT  
RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SENTIMENTS EXPRESSED IN  
ANY ADDRESS OR PAPER READ AT ITS MEETINGS."

THE

## SPECIAL FUNCTION OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF MEDICINE.

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ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT,

Delivered at the Annual Meeting in New York, 18th November, 1888.

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BY FREDERIC HENRY GERRISH, A.M., M.D.,  
OF PORTLAND, ME.

There would seem to be no need of argument to persuade any reasonable person of the necessity of something better than a mere grammar-school education as a preparation for the study of the science and art of medicine. One is not trusted to weigh our coal, to measure our fire-wood, to keep account of the provisions which we buy, without at least as much intellectual training as this; how much more ample should be the mental discipline of him who aspires to give us rules for the preservation of health, and to restore it, when disease has prostrated us! And yet, instead of there being no necessity for argument, it is a lamentable and astonishing fact that very many persons, who are generally considered rational beings, require prolonged and powerful argumentation before they will accept this truth, which ought to be almost axiomatic; and the great majority cannot be persuaded by any means whatever. The medical opinions of the highly cultured and the densely ignorant are strongly tinctured with superstition. The great unwashed think to ward off disease by means of amulets and the burning of tapers, to cure it with consecrated water and incantations; the people at

the other end of the social scale are the chief patrons of the latest therapeutical lunacy, which proclaims that knowledge of anatomy and physiology is not only useless, but is positively injurious. Those who know that they would court well-merited ridicule by putting their disordered watches for repair into the hands of a mechanic who had not devoted years to the careful observation and practical management of these comparatively simple machines, will intrust the cure of their bodies, the most wonderfully intricate mechanisms known, to creatures who boast of their absolute ignorance, and blasphemously lay claim to powers which no human being can possess. It seems hopeless, therefore, in this generation, to attempt to convince the people that medicine should be regarded as a science, to be mastered only by prolonged application, and that, before entering upon its technical study, one should have had a preliminary course, designed to prepare the mind to grasp and appreciate its facts, its theories, and its methods.

#### THE MEDICAL PROFESSION INDIFFERENT TO PRELIMINARY EDUCATION.

There is one class of men, however, to whom the amazed and dejected observer of the attitude of the public will turn with full confidence that from them he will derive cheer and encouragement. The medical profession, composed of men who have received the doctorate from institutions of repute, will, he is certain, declare with prompt and cordial unanimity that, before entering upon his professional pupilage, every student of medicine must have an amount and kind of schooling which will fit him to acquire his technical education. They have opportunities to know, better than any other class, the sad results of ignorance in physicians; and, consequently, he thinks no one of them will do aught to favor the project of a man who designs to begin medical study with inadequate equipment. He entertains an idea that something approaching a liberal education ought to be required; but, of course, the least demanded of the applicant will be a competent knowledge of his mother tongue, the ability to write clearly and to solve ordinary arithmetical and algebraic problems with accuracy, a familiarity with the outlines of political and physical geography, an acquaintance with the elements of Latin, upon which the nomenclature of medicine is so largely based, and with the fundamental facts and principles of natural

philosophy, without which physiology is an impenetrable mystery. How dumbfounded will be this innocent seeker after truth, when he learns, as inevitably he must, that a very large proportion of physicians, who possess respectable diplomas, consider this minimum preparation in large part unnecessary; well enough, but far from essential to practical men, such as they are proud to esteem themselves! And they live up to their expressed belief. A youth well advanced in his teens applies to the typical physician of this sort for admission to his office as a student of medicine. The youngster, we will suppose, has been brought up on a farm, has had a few winter terms of schooling, can read and spell indifferently, cipher a little, and achieve a cramped chirography with laborious exertion of the muscles of his right upper limb and his face. The preceptor takes the accomplishments for granted, and, if the boy has the reputation of honesty, without question admits him as his student.

#### THE INSUFFICIENT EQUIPMENT OF MOST MEDICAL STUDENTS.

It is unimportant here to dwell upon the career of the youth during his professional pupilage; the incompleteness, the utter inadequacy of his equipment for the study of medicine is the feature demanding our present contemplation.

He immediately discovers that his reading leads him into a region whose inhabitants speak a language of which he knows practically nothing. Untrained in intellectual processes, he either never discovers the only true method of learning the new tongue, or indolently decides that he can absorb all that he needs by association with physicians and by reading books. The dictionary, which should be the constant companion of every student, particularly during his first year of medical life, lies neglected, or, perhaps, is never purchased; and the novice flounders about in his desultory course, splashing up technical terms as recklessly as if their only use were to impress the ignorant with the idea of the learning of a man, who can utter these ponderous words so glibly. It is this kind of physician, who always employs "pulse" as a plural, of which the singular is "pult;" who drops the final letter from "forcep," when he means one instrument of the kind; who discourses with such apparent erudition over the most trivial malady, that his patient marvels at the skill of the doctor who has quickly restored him to health, even though "all his Latin parts were diseased." Very many of our

Fellows are professional teachers, and know from much observation that a slovenly conception of language by students—most conclusive evidence of a haphazard style of thinking—is a chief obstacle in the work of instruction. Having no habits of study, the pupil struggles along in an unmethodical way, and, consequently, wastes much of his time, even though he is industrious. From lack of logical training, he fails to follow the course of reasoning in many of the books which he reads, and gets perverted notions of important truths. Ignorance of the branches which are the proper prelude to medical study continually obstructs his progress, and at frequent intervals he is obliged to leave great gaps unbridged, for lack of material to span them. When he finally obtains a diploma, as he readily can, containing so extravagant a certification of his intellectual and moral worth, that, if he could translate it, even his exuberant conceit would blush at the untruthfulness of the recital, he enters upon his career of imposing upon a credulous public, and bringing legitimate medicine into undeserved disrepute.

Doubtless this description will appear to many minds as a gross burlesque, an intemperate and exaggerated account of a blemish in the body medical, infrequently seen and of trivial moment. But, unhappily, the story is entirely true. The public demands no education in those from whom it seeks medical advice; and the profession itself, by which is meant the great body of physicians, who are decorated with the degree of doctor, while insisting upon some technical training in those who seek admission to it, is content with a low standard for this requirement, and considers the exaction of a preliminary drill a matter of small consequence, to be evaded whenever possible. That the methods of teaching in the majority of our medical schools are strikingly faulty, the amount of instruction given far below reasonable limits, and the attainments demanded of candidates for graduation wretchedly insufficient, are facts not difficult of demonstration, and peculiarly within the domain of discussion in this society. But, at the present moment, it is well to concentrate our attention upon the indifference of the profession in the matter of education preparatory to medical study.

#### ATTEMPTS AT REFORM BY MEDICAL SOCIETIES.

The deficiency was long ago recognized by thoughtful men, indeed has always been appreciated in some degree; and the dissatisfaction

tion of those who saw clearly its lamentable results found frequent expression in various channels. National, state and other societies were often addressed on the subject by their presidents and orators, committees were appointed to devise plans for reform, and resolutions were adopted generally, if not invariably, without dissent. But the desired change did not appear. It is not difficult to induce an association to put itself on record to the effect that the standard of preparatory education must and shall be elevated; it is quite another thing to persuade the individuals composing the organization to act in accordance with this declaration. To the greater number of members, the idea presented by one or two earnest men seems commendable, and they vote with that display of enthusiasm which good-natured people are wont to show for a project in which they do not feel themselves especially concerned, and for which they are under no obligation to make any exertion. The echoes of their applause hardly die away before they disperse to their homes, and being removed from the sustaining atmosphere of the meeting, most of them lapse into their old slipshod ways. Their behavior reminds one of the riotous demonstrations of delight of the occupants of the galleries, when the hero of the drama pronounces some virtuous platitude. We hope that they are actuated in their daily lives by the holy motives for which they evince such admiration; but we have our fears that their practical morals are not blameless. Few men have the hardihood to array themselves openly on the side of convicted ignorance, and therefore those members who inwardly dissent outwardly agree; but they wilfully persist in their vicious courses in private.

It is well that societies take such action. A main reason for their not effecting more is that the intervals between their declarations are too long, and the impression made at one time is nearly or quite effaced before another blow is struck. And so the reform is deferred.

#### EFFORTS AT REFORM BY SOME MEDICAL SCHOOLS.

Until a very recent period, any male of the human species, who was apparently not less than seventeen years old, who would pay the stated fees, and whose complexion was sufficiently Caucasian, found no difficulty in entering even our most celebrated schools. Only females, children, the moneyless and negroes were excluded.

Candidates for admission were not compelled to show the possession of the slightest knowledge. A few years ago, a small number of schools, after a prudent period of warning to those who contemplated medical study, established a preliminary examination. Generally, no pretence of a high standard was made: a grammar-school education only was required. But, though it was so insignificant an exaction, it made a difference in the attendance which is almost incredible to one not entirely familiar with the attainments of the average medical student. So great was this falling off that one of the largest schools in the country, for many years so prosperous that it evidently thought itself entirely secure in the affection of the profession, found its patronage shrunken in one year so alarmingly that it beat a hasty and ignoble retreat to its former position, and thereafter, as previously, put a premium on incapacity and dullness. The executive officer of one of these schools, which adhered to its advanced professions, says that he receives more letters of inquiry about the examination than about all other matters relating to the school. The number who are rejected at the examination is small compared with that of those who refrain from coming for fear of rejection. And thus the school has to witness the growing material prosperity of a rival institution, which requires only cash of applicants, while its own classes are dwindling.

The movement toward a better preparation for technical training made little progress for some time, when, all at once, the circulars of many schools burst forth with the announcement that students must demonstrate their fitness for medical study. Had the leaven been working all these years, and suddenly displayed these effects? Had the eyes of so many faculties simultaneously been opened to the exceeding sinfulness of their former practices? Perhaps so; and yet, by a curious coincidence, these advertisements appeared not long after the Illinois State Board of Health proclaimed that, if schools wished their diplomas to be recognized in that State, they must have a preliminary examination.

#### THE INSINCERITY OF MANY MEDICAL SCHOOLS EXPOSED.

It is one thing to profess, quite another thing to practice. It may be remembered that, at our last annual meeting, there were reported the results of an investigation of the requirements for preliminary education in the medical colleges of the United States. What the

institutions announced was readily learned from Dr. Rauch's elaborate report,\* but to ascertain what they really required was much more difficult. It seemed necessary to adopt detective methods, and a little child, who had but just learned to write with a pen, was the principal medium through which the desired information was obtained. Letters were written to most of the schools, confessing ignorance of some study which was advertised as essential to admission, and asking if that would be an impediment to entrance. "If a school declined to modify its rules for such a correspondent, there would still be no conclusive evidence that it might not do so in the case of a person who was exceptionally prepared in other branches, and lacking in a single one; but, if a school, publicly announcing that it admitted pupils only after they had proved themselves educated in certain lines, on such an appeal agreed to ignore an important branch of preparatory study; still more, if it eagerly besought the patronage of this evidently unfitted candidate, it may be fairly claimed that the institution had demonstrated the hollowness of its professions and the utter insincerity of its position. The plan adopted cannot be regarded as a test of the measure of virtue of a school, but rather as a test of its capacity for vice. The result of the investigation showed that about one-quarter of our medical colleges make no pretence of requiring any real preliminary education in their pupils; a few hint vaguely at the desirability of some knowledge; and about two-thirds announce an examination or its equivalent, as shown by a certificate. Of these last one-half adhere to their published rules, and the other half evidently do not mean what they say and stand detected in their abominable fraud. The actual standard is extremely low. A very few schools require a preliminary education which is an approach to an equipment for medical study; a considerable number insist upon a knowledge of the ordinary grammar-school branches, with a mere trifle of natural philosophy; the most will admit any man who can write an intelligible letter of inquiry and pay his tuition fee, however deficient he may be intellectually."†

\* Annual Report of the Illinois State Board of Health.

† Extract from my report, presented at the Washington meeting of the Academy, 3d September, 1887.

As this report has not been published, it is pertinent to insert in this place

It would appear that the Illinois law has done much to stimulate the timid and reluctant schools to activity in a desirable direction; but it is evident that law alone will not accomplish all that is needed. Some will obey through fear; others will be set thinking as never before, and will acquiesce with the grace which waits on judgment; and others still will "keep the word of promise to the ear, and break it to the hope." No law will succeed which is not sustained by public approval. To be sure, the existence of a law helps in creating a supporting sentiment, but the major part of this work must be done by different means.

THE NECESSITY FOR A SOCIETY ON THE BASIS OF THE  
AMERICAN ACADEMY.

Just here, it seems to me, opens the field of the Academy. In 1876, the year of its birth, when the seven founders were assembled in Philadelphia, Dr. R. Lowry Sibbet read a paper entitled "The necessity of an organization which shall encourage a higher standard of qualifications in the medical profession." The keynote sounded that day is ringing still. The other societies of physicians

some of the answers received from schools which made haste to confess that their public announcements were fraudulent, and clamored, as it were, for the patronage of a person whose letter of inquiry bristled with evidences of illiteracy.

"The examination is not difficult. No one has as yet failed to pass."

"We do not propose to make our entrance examination a bugbear to applicants."

"Our preliminary examination is very simple. We don't require much philosophy—just a few elements. But I don't think you need worry about that."

"You will experience no difficulty in entering."

"Natural philosophy is not required, but is a suggestion as to a line of liberal education. You will have no trouble in passing the entrance examination."

"You need not worry over the examination."

"You need not be burdened by any fear of the examination."

"The preliminary examinations are not difficult or technical, and no deserving applicant is rejected on account of not being able to pass them."

"Never mind about the natural philosophy; that will be all right."

"Call and see me, when you reach the city, and I will arrange matters for you, so that there will be no trouble."

were established largely or wholly to promote technical knowledge, and only incidentally do they touch the interests of education. We have seen how futile are their spasmodic attempts at improvement of the quality and amount of teaching, how imperfect are the results of statutes on the subject, how essential it is that the profession itself should be converted to the belief that men who are to study medicine should have good minds, well trained and richly stored. How can this conversion be accomplished as speedily, as thoroughly, or, I would almost say, at all, except by means of a special society? It is thus chiefly that men are persuaded in matters of religion and politics. The experience of ages has demonstrated that these objects are not attained but through the agency of powerful organizations, which toil unceasingly to achieve their peculiar ends. How ineffectual would be the church, if it relaxed for a moment its hold on its votaries, or diminished its watchfulness for opportunities to augment its power! What utter defeat awaits the political party which fails to reach and constantly to impress the remotest hamlet with its arguments, and to keep in hand the whole body of its constituents! In these familiar examples we have our lesson. We have not sufficiently appreciated the need of incessant agitation. Rarely is opinion changed by a single presentation of an argument, however powerful; but repetition at short intervals finally succeeds. *Non vi, sed saepe cadendo.* As in the training of animals, and the education of children, so is it also in the persuasion of men —line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little.

#### THE WORK OF THE ACADEMY STRICTLY PHILANTHROPIC.

It is evident that this work is purely philanthropic, and, consequently, is far less likely to attract a large following than that of other medical societies. One may say that their object, also, is the benefit of humanity: that they aim at the improvement of their members in medical science, and that thus mankind is helped to greater health, increased comfort and longer life. True; but, while they are thus learning how better to aid their fellow-men, they are perfecting themselves in the particular line of work by which they get their living. There is not this double incentive to labor in the Academy. Striving to elevate the standard of medical education does not make one more skillful as a physician or surgeon;

on the contrary, it consumes time and strength which, if given to his regular labor, will make him a better practitioner and a richer. Our cause, therefore, calls for sacrifice, for unselfish devotion, for a spirit which is satisfied only with ideal results, for souls "alert with noble discontent, and upward yearnings of unstilled desire." And doubt not that it has them—not all in our company at present, but willing to join us, and eager to have a hand in the task.

But it is doubtless in your thoughts that we should do other things than this; we should investigate scientific problems, and report our results at our meetings, proving by the superior quality of our contributions that a classical education has enabled us to surpass others not thus favored, and, in this way, to present an object lesson in support of our main proposition. In this view I do not agree; not that I have the slightest fear that the college-bred physician will not justify the claims that are made for him, as man, practitioner, investigator, author; but because the most conspicuous efforts of the Academy should be, according to the original design, in a purely educational direction, and it is impossible that, to any large extent, men who have original scientific conceptions will first announce them at our meetings, where there will be at any one time so few who are competent to appreciate the merits of the new ideas. The inventor of a novel operation for removing the uterus, however enthusiastic a Fellow of the Academy, will carry his paper describing the process to the Gynaecological Society, where he is sure of a large company, capable of estimating its worth. The neurologist will take his discovery to the association of specialists whose daily experiences qualify them to hear him with full understanding; and so for all the rest, whether they cultivate limited portions of the great domain of medicine, or distribute their energies over it all. In the line of scientific work, we are handicapped from the start; we can offer no inducements which will, as a rule, attract the best efforts of the leaders.

#### GREAT INCREASE OF FELLOWSHIP NEEDED.

The first step in our undertaking is the adoption of a plan for securing the fellowship of all who are eligible under our rules, and would be creditable associates. There is an unpleasant implication in these closing words, but it is unavoidable. We not only recognize the great attainments and generous culture of many men who

have never graduated at a college, but we are compelled to admit that many who have received the baccalaureate degree possess little ability, and are not entitled to respect. The lion's hide has no monopoly in clothing the braying quadruped; too often we are chagrined to find that the sheepskin covers an ass. But the great majority of college-bred physicians would be welcome, and ought to be with us; and, with proper effort, we can win them.

Three years ago, Dr. Gihon, in his brilliant presidential address, after stating that the Academy had but 291 Fellows, asked: "Is that much of a harvest after nine years' tilling?" What tilling, pray? What large effort was ever made to increase our numbers? In my State there has long been a respectable percentage of doctors of medicine, who are also bachelors of arts and men of deservedly good repute; but their fellowship had not been sought, when our good friend discouragingly wrote his reasons "why this bantling has not made greater progress, and why it has no reason to expect it." That these worthy men were not indifferent to the purposes of our society, and only needed to be invited in the right way to engage in the unselfish task which it had set for itself, is sufficiently proven by the fact that, while there were but two Fellows in Maine at that time, there are forty-one to-day. I do not believe that "the time has come when every limitation to fellowship should be removed, except the solitary requirement that the candidate shall be in fact, as in title, learned in medicine, and in all else that that implies."\* Before we alter essentially the conditions of fellowship, we should gather under our banner all the eligibles who can be enlisted. Unless it is possible to demonstrate in this way that most college-bred physicians are so thoroughly convinced of the usefulness of their preparatory education that they are interested in the attempt to persuade others to pursue a like course, it is not probable that a large accession to our numbers will be made from among those who have had no such privileges in their youth. Though many of these last mentioned deeply deplore the meagreness of their early schooling, and make many sacrifices in order to give their sons a classical and scientific training, they could not be expected to wish admittance to a body which was avoided by those whom it was organized to include.

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\* Dr. Gihon's presidential address, 1885.

There are some physicians, however, though probably not many, who would be glad of an opportunity to enter the Academy on the passage of an examination, equivalent to that enforced in colleges conferring the degree of A. B. In this connection a letter, recently received by one of our Fellows, is of interest. The writer had been invited to apply for fellowship, but was obliged to decline, not being a college graduate. But he expresses deep interest in the Academy, and thinks that many, now debarred, might strive for fellowship, if it were possible to prove on examination the possession of such an education as the holding of a degree in arts indicates.

This suggestion, which comes from a gentleman of culture "whose influence," as the Fellow, who hoped to be able to recommend his election, remarks, "would be most useful to the Academy," might be adopted without the least danger of lowering the grade of requirements; and it is not impossible that, in the future, when fellowship in our society has become a greater honor than at present, and is sought with anxious eagerness, the certificate of the Academy that such an examination has been passed with credit will be everywhere regarded as equal to a baccalaureate diploma.

#### A PLAN TO AUGMENT THE FELLOWSHIP.

Entertaining the views which have just been expressed, in disagreement with those pronounced here three years ago, I hoped to demonstrate in my administration the correctness of my position. It seemed to me that the Academy had a right to expect to make greater progress, even in this matter of numbers; and, therefore, a plan was formed to test the question. To a number of my medical friends was sent the following circular, in which it will be observed, no hope of personal advantage is held out as an inducement, no opportunity to gratify a taste for display is hinted at, no benefit to one's self is even implied, save the satisfaction which must come from the performance of duty; and with the circular were enclosed a blank for application and a brief letter, inviting to fellowship and asking permission to stand as sponsor.

#### THE CIRCULAR.

"THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF MEDICINE, founded in 1876, is a society composed of physicians of at least three years' experience in practice, who, previously to graduation in medicine, received the degree of bachelor or master of arts, after a regular collegiate course. Its purpose is not to establish an aristocracy in the medical pro-

fession, but to advance the standard of requirements preliminary to technical study, to elevate medical education to a plane far above that which it now occupies, and, by other similar means, to promote the welfare of the profession.

"Already the purely scientific interests of medicine are provided for, as far as societies can further the cause, by organizations devoted to the development of the various specialties; but no other association has concentrated its attention on the field which the Academy was established to cultivate. It is believed that its purposes only need to be stated in order to arouse the hearty sympathy of those physicians whose preparatory studies and honorable standing make them eligible to its fellowship. The necessity for the work which the Academy is equipped to perform is too obvious to require demonstration, and it is in the highest degree desirable that every qualified physician should participate in this labor, not simply by using his individual efforts to influence those with whom he comes personally in contact, but also by uniting with those of his professional brethren who entertain the same opinions and are actuated by the same high motives. Only by the combined and persistent endeavors of such men can medical education in this country be made what it ought to be, and this task is of the nature of an obligation, which the nobility of culture imposes upon all who bear its insignia.

"It is earnestly hoped that each physician who receives this circular will display his willingness to share in this great undertaking by entering the Academy at an early date.

"A blank application for fellowship is enclosed herewith."

The replies came so promptly and were so cordial that it seemed wise to propose the plan to my associates; for, if it was efficacious in the hands of one, why should it not prosper with all? Consequently, to nearly every Fellow was sent the following circular letter, with three of the explanatory leaves, three blank applications, a list of the Fellows in this State, a stamped envelope directed to myself for reply, and a personal autograph letter asking his aid:—

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF MEDICINE. PORTLAND, MAINE, August, 1888.

DR. .....

*Dear Sir:* The principal need of the Academy at present is a large membership. It is of the highest importance that, practically, all of the college-bred physicians in the United States should be entered on its rolls. To a great extent this result can be accomplished speedily through the efforts of the present Fellows, and only thus. Experience has demonstrated that few apply for membership without being invited; but it has also shown that, with proper urging, it is not difficult to induce men to join our ranks.

Heretofore no systematic attempt has been made to increase our fellowship; but such a measure is now projected, and in it I beg to ask your earnest coöperation.

There are, doubtless, in your neighborhood (city, county, State), or, at all events, among your acquaintances, some, I trust many, who will be induced by your personal persuasion to apply for admission. The method which has proved most successful is for the Fellow to write an *autograph* letter, stating the case, offering to stand as sponsor

requesting an early reply, and enclosing a blank for application, a circular setting forth the objects of the Academy, and a stamped envelope for the answer. If a response does not arrive in a fortnight, a second letter, calling attention to the first, is desirable. When the applications are received, the Fellow should sign the recommendation, and forward the papers to the president.

Three circulars and three blanks are enclosed herewith, and it will afford me much pleasure to supply you with as many more as you shall request.

The service which the Academy asks of you calls for the writing of a number of letters and the expenditure of some valuable time in the search for suitable candidates; but, certainly, it is not greater than any Fellow is more than willing to devote to the cause in which he enlisted by entering the Academy.

If every Fellow will do what he can to awaken the interest of his friends, our numbers will be immediately so augmented as to make the Academy a most powerful and honored organization, and enable it to contribute in a hitherto unexampled manner to the accomplishment of the reforms which it was instituted to promote.

Hoping for your support and encouragement in this work, and awaiting your reply with eagerness, I am,                   Respectfully yours,

FREDERIC HENRY GERRISH, *President.*

I am obliged to confess that the result has fallen far short of what seemed moderate anticipation. That most of the letters were delivered would seem to be sufficiently attested by the return of only one as uncalled for. Less than half were answered in any way, though a second circular letter, requesting attention to the first, was sent to all who had not replied. Forty-five applications were gathered by twenty six Fellows, in addition to fifty-three, which were secured by one other; so that we add ninety-eight to our membership—more than in any two years previously. Probably this does not represent the entire product of the scheme: some have reported themselves as expecting to procure applications, and these will swell the list of next year. My hope was to double our numbers; for I thought that there could be few Fellows who had not among their acquaintances some who were eligible and would accept an invitation to fellowship. When one Fellow can obtain, without difficulty, more than fifty applications—a number exceeding the entire admissions in any former year—it is not reasonable to suppose that the other three hundred cannot procure an average of one apiece with slight exertion.

The causes of so small a return for the prolonged and irksome toil which it cost are doubtless, first, the fact that the vitality of the Academy was almost suspended during the year immediately preceding: it was proposed to omit the annual meeting, and, when held, it was almost spiritless; the papers were few, hardly enough addi-

tions were made to compensate for the mortality subtractions, and nobody could have felt otherwise than depressed at the dismal performance. It takes time and powerful effort to regain so much lost ground; and it is to be hoped that the Fellows will never again allow themselves to be deluded with the notion that any society will progress, or even keep alive, without the devoted care and constant activity of its members. Health and vigor cannot be looked for in the prolonged absence of nourishment and exercise—a commonplace which ought not to be required in an assemblage of physiologists. Second, it is unquestionably true of our association, as of every other of which I have knowledge, that it contains many indifferent members, who are not impartially called dead-wood. This is the kind of men who are never willing to do anything but share in the success which others have won, and administer caustic rebuke in the event of failure. Third, it was unfortunate in this regard, to have a president of whom the Fellows knew so little. Finally, and more potent as a reason for the failure of the scheme than all the foregoing, was the fact that the Fellows had never been made to understand that each of them was under obligation to promote the welfare of the Academy.

The most useful, as well as most conspicuous feature of the plan proposed is the inclusion of every Fellow in the proposed work. If all the labor of a society is performed by a few members, that organization contains an element of weakness that may at any time destroy it. But if every individual composing the whole makes a regular contribution to its support, each must feel an interest in its prosperity, which is otherwise impossible. In the Academy we have no annual tax of money, and, after paying his initiation fee, no Fellow has been called upon for any services which he could consider obligatory, unless he has accepted an official position. Consequently, there has been no demand upon the loyalty or energy of the members generally, and it is not wonderful that their interest has been small. If they had been asked frequently to render some aid to the cause, if in any way the necessities of the situation had been kept before them, the attempt which has been made would have been crowned with success, and we might to-day rejoice in a membership of two or three thousand.

**A COMMITTEE ON INCREASE OF FELLOWSHIP NEEDED.**

The experience of the past should guide our future conduct. I suggest, therefore, that a committee of three Fellows who are widely and favorably known, energetic and willing to give hard work to the cause, be appointed, with instructions to procure the address of each physician in the United States who is eligible to fellowship under our rules; to ascertain his standing; to furnish him, if worthy, with a historical sketch of the Academy, a list of its Fellows, a brief statement of its purposes and principles, and an invitation to enter it. The Fellow from whom favorable information is obtained will stand as the candidate's sponsor. I feel a good deal of confidence that our numbers could be trebled, perhaps quadrupled, by this system in one year. I recommend the appropriation of \$200 to defray the expenses of this committee.

Not only does the Academy need a large increase in numbers, but means should be taken to arouse the flagging enthusiasm of the Fellows. Many who do not know much about our society would be gratified and awakened by full information concerning it. To this end I make several suggestions:—

**A CATALOGUE OF THE FELLOWS DEMANDED.**

A need which has been often felt is a catalogue of our Fellows. Once, at least, it was thought to have been provided for; but nothing came of the attempt. I advise, therefore, the appointment of a committee of three Fellows, instructed to prepare and publish a catalogue of the Academy, containing the following data concerning each living Fellow or Honorary Member; his name in full; post-office address; collegiate degrees received, with date of each, and name of institution conferring them; official positions of importance held by him, such as professorships, physiciancies or surgeonies to hospitals, membership in state boards of health, principal offices in important societies; high political appointments; the titles of three volumes, and of three pamphlets or articles of which he is the author. The catalogue should also contain the name of each deceased Fellow and Honorary Member, and of his last place of residence, the date and place of his death, his age and the data concerning his degrees, positions and writings which would be presented if he were still living. A copy of this catalogue should be sent to each Fellow, to every respectable medical journal, and to

every public medical library in the country. One hundred copies more than are needed for these purposes should be printed, and sold to parties wishing to purchase them. A sum not exceeding two hundred and fifty dollars should be appropriated for the expenses of this committee.

#### THE TRANSACTIONS SHOULD BE PUBLISHED.

The by-laws provide that the council of the Academy shall "decide upon and superintend all its publications," and that the secretary "shall edit the transactions in the manner and style agreed upon by the council." Hitherto the president's address has usually been published in pamphlet form, and distributed to the Fellows, and a very few other papers have been thus honored; but "the transactions" referred to in the by-laws have not been issued. It would seem that the time has come for action in the premises. The whole business is in the control of the council; but that committee will unquestionably receive with pleasure an expression of the wishes of the Academy. It would be wise for the council to select for publication such of this year's essays as seem worthy of this distinction, ascertain the cost of printing and binding five hundred copies, and the number of these which would be purchased at cost by the Fellows. If the demand should warrant the attempt, the business could be undertaken with no chance of burdening our treasury, and with a most beneficial effect upon the reputation of our society.

#### THE PRICE OF THE PARCHMENT DIPLOMA.

A few years after the founding of the Academy, a Latin certificate of membership was prepared and engraved. The price of this certificate, printed on parchment, is fixed by the constitution at ten dollars, a sum so large as to be almost prohibitory. Only fifty-one copies have been sold. The plate was paid for long ago, and there appears to be no good reason for continuing a policy which practically deprives most of our members of an official certificate of fellowship, worthy of the dignity of the organization. I, therefore, propose a change in the constitution, reducing the sum to be paid for these diplomas to cost, which, at present rates, would not exceed two dollars each. Very soon after the passage of this amendment, there will be a brisk demand for these parchments, and our society

will be brought prominently to the attention of thousands who have never heard of it before. Let us hope that the time is not far distant when the Academy shall be so prosperous that the admission fee can safely be raised to a price which shall enable it to issue a diploma to every Fellow on admission, without additional charge.

#### A COMMITTEE TO PROCURE ESSAYS REQUIRED.

It is not a small task to procure essayists for our meetings. Our Fellows are busy men, most being actively engaged in practice, and very many being teachers in colleges, physicians and surgeons in hospitals, editors, authors, and frequent contributors to medical societies; and very few voluntarily offer papers to the Academy. To illustrate the labor of providing acceptable entertainment for a meeting, it may be remarked that the present programme is the result of nearly fifty urgent invitations by the president, and a large number by the secretary. I suggest that a special committee be charged with this duty for the ensuing year.

The initial meeting of the Congress of American Physicians and Surgeons was held in the city of Washington this year, and the success of the venture was sufficient to make it probable that a similar gathering will take place hereafter triennially. It is advisable for the Academy to consider the expediency of associating itself with the other societies composing the Congress, and thus bringing itself into more prominent notice than it has hitherto enjoyed.

#### PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION DISCUSSED.

At our last meeting in this city, seven amendments to the constitution were proposed by six different Fellows. These were laid over without decisive action at Pittsburgh, and again at Washington, and now they present themselves anew for your consideration. They naturally are arranged in two distinct groups, six being in one, and one in the other. Those of the first set relate to membership. It is pertinent for me to mention them, and offer my comments, which I do with sincere appreciation of the loyalty of the proposers, and most hearty regret at being constrained to differ with them on points which they have much at heart, and firmly believe to be important for the welfare of the Academy.

Dr. Sibbet wishes to have a provision for "corresponding mem-

bers," who shall be distinguished medical men in foreign lands. I would prefer to delay this movement until we shall be able to communicate to such gentlemen as shall be interested to correspond with us tidings concerning medical education in America of a kind more creditable to our own land.

B. S. OR PH. B. EQUIVALENT TO A. B.

Dr. Sibbet also proposes that "candidates having other literary degrees than Bachelor of Arts or Master of Arts may be elected as Fellows, provided they shall not exceed five percentum of the whole number; and provided, also, that they shall have contributed to the literature of the profession." For instance, a gentleman who is not a college alumnus, but has received an honorary degree of Doctor of Philosophy, might be admitted under this rule; whereas, an equally well-educated physician, who has no literary degree except an honorary A.M., cannot enter. This may not be what is intended, but the rule would be easily capable of the construction which I have put upon it.

It is clear to my mind that we are not acting with entire consistency in excluding those, who, instead of the degree of Bachelor of Arts, have taken that of Bachelor of Science or Bachelor of Philosophy. One would expect us to put the two on the same footing, judging from the words of our constitution, which says:

"The objects of the Academy shall be (1) to bring those who are Alumni of Classical, *Scientific* and Medical schools into closer relations with each other; (2) to encourage young men to pursue regular courses of study in Classical and *Scientific* institutions before entering upon the study of medicine." In many colleges the students in the same class, while pursuing identical lines in most respects, follow diverging lines in others. The drill is equally severe, the mental discipline probably as great in one as in the other; but, because one group has chosen to pay particular attention to the humanities, and the other has selected a curriculum in which the natural sciences have had a more prominent place, the degree in arts is conferred on the one, and that in science on the other. The A. B. and the B. S. are intended to balance in the academic scales. On what ground do we decide the one to be evidence of a good education, and ignore the four years of studious application which is represented by the others? Suppose that a young man has

looked forward to our fellowship as a coveted honor, and decides on the strength of our counsel in Article II of the constitution to take a regular preparatory course. His tastes lead him toward the physical sciences rather than to the classics, and without noticing the restrictions in Article III, he follows the plan which ends in the B. S. degree. He is as able, as well furnished mentally, as upright as his brother, who is A. B. But, after the two have become doctors of medicine, the latter can enjoy our association, and the former is excluded. Would he not feel an excusable bitterness at our treatment of him?

I hold in my hand an application from a physician who has been engaged in practice eleven years, is a Bachelor of Science and a Doctor of Philosophy. His sponsor, knowing him to be college-bred, thought that he was a Bachelor of Arts; but learning the fact, writes, "If any discretion is allowed, I would strongly recommend his admission." It seems to me that the interests of the Academy would not suffer by recognizing B. S. and Ph. B. as the equals of A. B., provided that they have been obtained after a regular four years' course. But an amendment must be differently worded from that under discussion in order to effect this result.

Dr. Gihon would admit "graduates in medicine, who, having no degree in letters received in course, have distinguished themselves in medicine and collateral sciences." Literally interpreted, this rule would open the door to no dangerously large number; for, while many who have no literary degree distinguish themselves in medicine, very few become noted for their learning in collateral sciences also. But, substituting "or" for "and," will it not be better to leave this matter as it is, until we have gathered in all the good men possible under our existing rule?

Dr. Bush would give the council power to nominate for fellowship any honorable physician, who has distinguished himself by the production of any valuable publication. On this proposition the same criticism is offered as on the preceding.

Dr. Edward Jackson would have for each candidate three sponsors, who should write out a statement of his fitness. After a year's deliberation the council may report on the case, and the society may elect. At a time like the present, when the chief need of the Academy seems to be a large increase of members, it would hardly be politic to make admission more difficult than it is now. The

Academy probably has enough confidence in the discretion of its Fellows, to take the approval of any one of them as abundant testimony to the fitness of a candidate.

Dr. McIntire would have the election of an applicant delayed a year after the approving report of the council is made. This would be a safeguard against the introduction of undesirable persons; but the year of waiting would be unnecessarily annoying to the candidate, because the same advantage would be gained by the simple device of having each Fellow supplied with a list of applicants a short time before the annual meeting. Then, if any Fellow wished to object to the admission of any one whose name was thus presented, he could readily do so by letter or in person. This method works admirably in the Maine Medical Association, in which it has long been in operation.

#### DOES THE ACADEMY NEED A CODE OF ETHICS?

The sole proposal of the second set relates to an utterly different subject. Dr. Sutton, one of our charter members, and but recently our president, advocates a change in Article VIII, Section I. At present the paragraph runs thus: "The Fellows of the Academy, in their relations with each other and with their fellow-men, agree to be governed by the principles embodied in the present code of ethics of the American Medical Association, and by the constitution and by-laws of the Academy." Dr. Sutton desires to have this amended to read as follows: "The Fellows of the Academy will be governed by those principles which actuate educated, cultured and honorable men in every profession, and by the Constitution and By-laws of the Academy."

To this proposition I trust that the society will give its most serious and judicial meditation. For my own part, I have no objection to the principles embodied in the Code of the American Medical Association. The expression of them seems to me to be not altogether felicitous; but, if I understand them, they are worthy of approval. During the unhappy controversy over the Code in this State several years ago, my sympathies were with the old code men. It would be only harmful now to revive in detail the memories of that extremely unfortunate episode. Nobody on either side would wish to renew the discussion, with its attendant circumstances of ill-feeling and hostile exhibitions. But though I entertain no

desire to have my State Medical Association abolish its Code, which is that of the national society, I believe that the Academy will act wisely if it adopts the alteration under consideration. If we had no Code, it would not occur to us that one was needed. We are here not as therapeutists, but as reformers. If we discard all allusions to codes, we shall be in no peril of an invasion of wicked or crazy irregulars; for no candidate's application can be considered without the approving signature of a Fellow in good standing. We need have no suspicion that the proposer of the alteration is plotting to obtain our sanction in advance to orgies of unholy consultations. But more important than these thoughts is the fact, encountered by more than one of us in his search for applicants, that the presence in our Constitution of the paragraph under discussion is an obstacle of the gravest nature in the way of an increase in our numbers. The objection does not come from the weak and whimsical, but from strong, high-minded thinkers. Many have been offended by what they consider the unjust and tyrannical conduct of the American Medical Association, and shun membership in any society which even seems to be a satellite of it. After three years in which to ponder on the subject, I have fully decided that the adoption of this amendment is consistent with the strict, orthodox principles of medical ethics in which I was reared, and is for the best interests of the Academy.

#### THE ADMISSION OF WOMEN.

Never before has it been appropriate to address the Academy as "Ladies and Gentlemen;" but to-day it is my privilege to use this significant expression. You have accepted as Fellows a number of women, and henceforth we who have labored in this society for the advancement of medical education are to have the coöperation of the sex, long excluded from medical associations, but now admitted on an equal footing with men in some of the foremost of our professional organizations. It is indicative of a marked change of sentiment and opinion that bodies as conservative as the Massachusetts Medical Society and the Philadelphia County Medical Society have opened their doors to all, without reference to sex, who have the requisite ability and training. It is not creditable to our country, or in keeping with the liberality which theoretically characterizes our institutions, that a discrimination should so long have been

made against women in scientific associations. But considerations of justice have at last prevailed so generally that, at the present time, the opposition to educated physicians on account of sex is feeble, compared to the violent antagonism which formerly existed. The stock arguments that women have not the physical strength to sustain them in the trials of practice, that they lack the intellectual capacity and the moral force which we deem essential, have ceased to have weight. Facts, easily observed, prove the contrary. There are too many women practicing medicine scientifically, skillfully, successfully, and without injury to their health, to permit such objections to influence any one who is well informed. Having been the medical teacher of many women, and having watched the careers of a considerable number with peculiar interest and satisfaction, I feel fully justified in the prediction that the Academy will be strengthened by the admission of the gentlewomen who have entered to-day, and will never regret this departure from its former usages.

It is noteworthy that some of the staunchest upholders of a strict preliminary examination, as ascertained by the detective work of our committee on the subject last year, were the schools managed by women. They had advanced their standard because they saw the necessity for reform, and they adhered honestly to their published rules, as so many of the schools for men did not. The proportion of those which stood by their colors was much greater among the women than among the men.

It is simply justice to the Academy to state that it has never objected to the admission of women. This year is the first in which women have applied for fellowship.

#### EMINENT DECEASED FELLOWS.

Since our last meeting the grave has closed over several of our associates. Of these the most distinguished was Cornelius Rea Agnew, whose sudden death shocked the community and left a void so great that it will not cease to be felt as long as any survive who knew him. His splendid natural endowments, his admirable development, his great achievements, his moral elevation, have all been the subjects of eloquent eulogies so recently, that further mention of them is superfluous here.

It would be unjust to my feelings, were this occasion to be allowed to pass without my paying a tribute to the memory of one of

our lost companions whom I knew most intimately, Edward Swift Dunster. He was still a young man when I first became acquainted with him, but he had already made an enviable reputation as a writer and lecturer. We were associated for two years in the faculty of a large medical school, and, from sympathy of tastes and community of interests, we were much together. He honored me with his friendship, and the memory of it remains with me like a precious benediction. His varied and accurate learning, his scholarly instincts, his choice and elegant diction, and ready wit combined to make him a most entertaining companion and a teacher of unusual brilliancy and power. But though he won my admiration for these attractive attributes, I chiefly delight to think of him as a bold and tireless advocate of the principles for which the Academy contends. Early and late he struggled with the prejudices, the indifference, the stolid and unteachable conservatism, which those who should have aided him threw continually in his way; and just when the path began to be clearer, and hope was strengthening into expectation, the fatal summons came, and the task which he had set himself was left unfinished. His death is a distinct and irreparable loss to the cause of sound medical education. His vacant place should be a continual reminder of the work which still remains to be done, and should stimulate us to renewed exertions.

#### IN CONCLUSION.

In obedience to our rules, I have written this address. I have not attempted an oration, for my conception of my duty compelled the belief that the required paper should be of a business character. Consequently, avoiding rhetorical horticulture, I have given an account of my stewardship, and have expressed my views of the functions of the Academy, and of the best methods to pursue in order to compass the desired results.

A year ago, when you paid me the compliment of elevation to the presidency, my surprise at the altogether unsought and unanticipated election prevented an adequate and seemly acknowledgment of your partiality. I could merely stammer my thanks and a promise to do my best to promote the interests of the Academy. My term of service closes at this meeting; and, as I look back upon it, I find that the hopes, which seemed at first to be easy of realization, have been but imperfectly fulfilled. But I

have no broken promise to regret, for I have really done what I could for the Academy.

I am fully persuaded that less harm per year would ensue from the absolute cessation of all progress in medical discovery and invention, than now results from the low standard of preliminary and technical education. I believe, too, that our cause needs courageous, persistent and aggressive action. Holding these opinions, the labor which I have done has been the practical expression of a conviction of duty. And my only grief in contemplation of the result is that my best has been so poor.





















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